

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 00898 091336Z

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2903

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SECTO 126

FOR SOBER (NEA) FROM ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: REPLY TO LETTER FROM CONGRESSMAN WAXMAN

1. FOLLOWING IS REVISED REPLY TO FEBRUARY 20 LETTER FROM CONGRESSMAN WAXMAN. BEFORE SENDING, PLEASE CLEAR WITH L, H, AND DIRGEN, AND LET ME KNOW OF THERE ARE ANY PROBLEMS.

2. BEGIN TEXT:

DEAR MR. WAXMAN:

THE SECRETARY HAS ASKED ME TO REPLY TO YOUR LETTER REGARDING VISA POLICIES OF SAUDI ARABIA AS THEY AFFECT AMERICAN JEWS. YOU ASK WHAT IS THE US POSITION WITH REGARD TO THESE SAUDI VISA POLICIES AND THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF US ACQUIESCENCE OF PARTICIPATION IN THESE POLICIES.

IT IS THE ESTABLISHED POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES TO OPPOSE AND TO ELIMINATE, WHERE IT IS IN OUR JURISDICTION TO DO SO, DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, SEX OR NATIONAL ORIGIN. OUR POSITION WAS MOST RECENTLY REITERATED BY THE PRESIDENT ON FEBRUARY 26 IN CONNECTION WITH REPORTS OF ATTEMPTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL BANKING

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PAGE 02 DAMASC 00898 091336Z

COMMUNITY TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST CERTAIN INSTITUTIONS

OR INDIVIDUALS ON THE BASIS OF RELIGIOUS OR ETHIC
GROUNDS. I BELIEVE THE PRESIDENT LEFT NO DOUBT ABOUT
THE POSITION OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE UNITED
STATES THAT SUCH DISCRIMINATION IS TOTALLY CONTRARY TO
THE AMERICAN TRADITION AND REPUGNANT TO AMERICAN
PRINCIPLES.

BOTH THROUGH PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND IN OUR PRIVATE
CONTACTS WITH GOVERNMENTS WHOSE POLICIES WE CONSIDER
DISCRIMINATORY, WE MAKE CERTAIN THAT THEY UNDERSTAND
OUR POSITION. WHEN OTHER GOVERNMENTS' ACTIONS INCLUDE
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST AMERICAN CITIZENS AND THOSE
CITIZENS SEEK OUR ASSISTANCE, AS IN THE CASE OF
APPLICANTS FOR VISAS TO SAUDI ARABIA, WE RENDER
ASSISTANCE. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, OF COURSE, THE
DECISION ABOUT WHOM A GOVERNMENT WILL ADMIT TO ITS
TERRITORY IS A SOVEREIGN MATTER. WHEN ANOTHER
GOVERNMENT EXERCISES ITS SOVEREIGNTY IN WAYS WE CONSIDER
CONTRARY TO PRINCIPLES OF NON-DISCRIMINATION WHICH
WE BELIEVE SHOULD BE UNIVERSALLY APPLICABLE, WE MUST
MAKE A JUDGEMENT, IN DECIDING HOW TO RESPOND TO SUCH
SITUATION, AS TO WHAT WILL BEST SERVE OUR OVERALL
NATIONAL INTEREST.

THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR ITS PART PURSUES A
NON-DISCRIMINATORY POLICY IN THE ASSIGNMENT OF ITS
PERSONNEL OVERSEAS. ALLEGATIONS THAT OTHER AGENCIES
MAY HAVE DISCRIMINATED ARE NOW UNDER INVESTIGATION
PURSUANT TO THE PRESIDENT'S DIRECTIVE. FOR THE
DEPARTMENT, IT IS PART OF OUR REGULATIONS. NO POST
IN THE FIELD AND NO OFFICE IN STATE, AID, OR USIA
CAN REFUSE THE ASSIGNMENT OF AN EMPLOYEE ON THE BASIS
OF RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, SEX OR NATIONAL ORIGIN. THE
U.S. GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, COULD NOT PREVENT ANOTHER
GOVERNMENT FROM REFUSING TO ISSUE A VISA TO AN
OFFICER ASSIGNED TO DUTY IN ITS TERRITORY, THOUGH
WE COULD, AND WOULD, OBJECT TO SUCH ACTION IN
STRONG TERMS.

WHILE WE DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY AMERICAN FOREIGN
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PAGE 03 DAMASC 00898 091336Z

SERVICE PERSONNEL OF THE JEWISH FAITH HAVE BEEN
ASSIGNED TO SERVE IN SAUDI ARABIA NOR DO WE RECALL
ANY WHO HAVE SOUGHT ASSIGNMENTS THERE IN RECENT YEARS,
WE CANNOT STATE CATEGORICALLY THAT THIS IS THE CASE
BECAUSE OUR PERSONNEL RECORDS DO NOT INDICATE THE
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OR CONVICTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL.
OBVIOUSLY, IF SUCH AN OFFICER APPLIED FOR AN
ASSIGNMENT IN SAUDI ARABIA, THE APPLICATION WOULD BE

CONSIDERED ON ITS MERITS.

FINALLY, WE BELIEVE THAT THE BEST MEANS TO ELIMINATE
DISCRIMINATORY POLICIES AGAINST PERSONS OR COMPANIES
IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS THROUGH EFFORTS OT ACHIEVE A
JUST AND LASTING PEACE SETTLEMENT IN THAT REGION.

SINCERELY,

END TEXT.

KISSINGER

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